Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Messa di Requiem:* Conservatively Neo-Renaissance yet Distinctly Dramatic

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The Italian music critic Fedele d'Amico (1912-1990) admired "Chopin's sensibility for the piano, Ravel's for the orchestra, and Pizzetti's for the chorus."[1] While Amico's praise for his fellow countryman may have been biased by their shared national heritage, Ildebrando Pizzetti's limited choral oeuvre exhibits traits that sensitively integrate neo-Renaissance techniques with dramatic contrast, structural pacing, and archaic sonorities. Among his works, the *Messa di Requiem* (1922-23) stands as a prime example of his combined use of contrapuntal techniques, textual impressions, neo-Romantic harmonies, and varied textures, all of which create a compelling choral composition. Its inclusion in the choral canon is justified in that it is an example of employing neo-Renaissance techniques to the text of the Requiem Mass, and it exemplifies a shift in Italian sacred music from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. It also parallels contemporary neo-Renaissance settings of the Mass Ordinary, sharing striking similarities with Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Mass in G Minor* (1920-21) and Frank Martin's *Mass for Two Mixed Choirs* (1922). Furthermore, Pizzetti composed his Requiem Mass as a result of relevant personal and cultural influences, which will be explored through historical and biographical contexts.

[1] John C. G. Waterhouse program notes to: *Pizzetti: Messa di Requiem, Tre composizioni corali, Due composizioni corali*. Stefan Parkman, the Danish National Radio Chamber Choir. Colchester, Essex, England: Chandos CD 8964, 1991.

Historical Context

Political and religious developments in Italy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provide an important backdrop for Italian composition at the time. Italy's unification into a single state around 1870 occurred through a gradual process, beginning approximately with the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and culminating with the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Only then did the Italian government move its capital from Florence to Rome. This late date of unification––combined with Italy's lack of national material wealth––bred a sort of national inferiority complex. This contributed to a "dispiriting environment for an intelligent and cultivated person."[2] The search for national identity continued throughout the period leading up to the Second World War, exemplified by

[2] John C. G. Waterhouse. *The Emergence of Italian Music* (up to 1940) (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1968), microfilm, 11.

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Benito Mussolini's idolization of Ancient Rome and Caesar.

The turn of the twentieth century also represented a period of musical reform in the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout the nineteenth century, dramatic secular music increasingly infiltrated liturgical services. By the 1890s, organists customarily played Rossini overtures as liturgical voluntaries, and—even more incredible—complete operas by Rossini and Verdi were refit with sacred texts for performance in churches.[3] Pope Pius X initiated musical reforms in 1903 when he issued his motu proprio, *Tra le sollecitudini*, which asserted the primacy of Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony that emulated the style of Palestrina's compositions. In addition, the document discouraged secular and contemporary influences; it disallowed the modification of prescribed texts; and it barred the use of the piano and "noisy or frivolous instruments such as drums, cymbals [and] bells."[4] From this time onwards, a recurrent feature of Italian sacred music included elements of historicism and, in particular, a compositional interest in chant and Renaissance polyphony.[5] The following discussion will establish Pizzetti's *Messa di Requiem* as an exemplary model of Italian sacred music in the early-to-mid-twentieth century and examine its relation with contemporary neo-Renaissance compositions.

[3] Ibid, 39.

[4] Pope Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*. Motu proprio promulgated on November 22, 1903, http://www.adoremus.org/TraLeSollecitudini.html [accessed February 1, 2010]. Chapter VI, Section 19.

[5] Waterhouse, *Emergence of Italian Music*, 40.

Italian Pride: Pizzetti's Musical Influences and Professional Activity

Ildebrando Pizzetti was born in Parma in 1884, and he spent his childhood in Reggio Emilia, a town in northern Italy approximately 80 kilometers northwest of Bologna. His musical training began at home, where he studied piano with his father, Odoardo. From this early age Ildebrando also demonstrated an interest in drama by writing several plays for his classmates, and in 1894 they performed two such works, *Odio e Amore (I Hate and I Love)* and *La morte di un prigioniero nella Rocca dello Spielberg (The Death of a Prisoner in Spielberg Castle)*.[6] In spite of his enthusiasm for drama, however, he continued formal studies only in music, entering the Parma Conservatory at age eleven and receiving a composition diploma in 1901.

Pizzetti's musical influences reflect a blend of Renaissance, early Baroque, and contemporary composers, with particular emphasis on historical works. While at the Parma Conservatory, he studied with the Italian musicologist Giovanni Tebaldini (1864-1952), who instructed Pizzetti in the genres of chant, motet, and madrigal, introducing him to the works of Marenzio, Lasso, Victoria, Palestrina, Gesualdo, and Monteverdi.[7] In addition to Pizzetti's interest in sixteenth-century polyphony and seventeenth-century opera, he was notably influenced by Verdi, Wagner, Debussy, and Mussorgsky.[8] Pizzetti's first sighting of Verdi occurred in 1900 at a concert that celebrated the opera composer's

[6] Guido M. Gatti. *Ildebrando Pizzetti* (London: D. Dobson, 1951), 10.

[7] Giovanni Tebaldini, *Ildebrando Pizzetti nelle 'Memorie,'* (Fresching, Parma, 1931), 63.

[8] "Obituary: Ildebrando Pizzetti." *The Musical Times* 109 (April 1968): 362.

eighty-seventh birthday in Busseto at Sant' Agata. Pizzetti described the event thirteen years later: "I had the impression that a complete silence had suddenly descended on the scene. Very rarely, either before or since, have I had such an impression of universal religious awe."[9]

The blend of historical and modern musical influences manifested itself in Pizzetti's involvement with the Societa Nazionale di Musica beginning in 1917. This organization included fellow Italian composers Malipiero, Respighi, Zandonai, Tedesco (Pizzetti's pupil), Tommasini, and Perinello, and it aimed to perform "the most interesting music of the young Italians, resurrecting old forgotten music, printing the most interesting new compositions, publishing a periodical, and organizing a system of exchanging new music with the principal foreign countries."[10] In its inaugural year, the organization performed 112 works, and of those, 102 were by Italian composers.

Pizzetti held several important teaching posts throughout his life, which began with his appointment to teach harmony and counterpoint at his alma mater conservatory in 1907. The following year, he accepted a teaching position at the Instituto Musicale in Florence, and from 1917 to 1923 he served as the Institute's director. Following his tenure there, he became director of the Milan Conservatory in 1924 before he moved to Rome in 1936, where he taught advanced composition at the Accademia di S. Cecilia until his retirement in 1958. The fascist regime recognized his musical contributions by admitting him to the Reale Accademia d'Italia, the highest honor the regime bestowed upon artists.

[9] Gatti, 11.

[10] Waterhouse, *Emergence of Italian Music*, 190.

In addition to teaching at several music conservatories, Pizzetti frequently published music criticism in a variety of periodicals, revealing his conservative musical tenets. When he attended the famous premiere of *Le sacre du printemps* in 1913, he was confused and disoriented, and in general he failed to understand or appreciate both Stravinsky and Schoenberg.[11] In 1932, he notoriously signed a manifesto alongside Respighi, Zandonai, and other reactionaries, attacking modern musical trends and advocating a return to tradition.[12] Besides his criticism of new musical trends, he also denounced the deficient quality of conservatory training. While living in the rich intellectual culture of Florence, he published articles regularly from 1908 to 1916 in La voce, a publication organized by Italian philosophers. For example, in 1909 he expressed disapproval of the low standards for admission to conservatories: at that time pupils only needed to be literate, to be able to sing in tune, and to possess the "strength to be able to play an instrument."[13] Further, he criticized, "totally untalented pupils could continue their studies [at conservatories] without hindrance for five or six years."[14]

Choral Compositions: Dramatic Origins

The theater served as an early forum for exploring choral composition by providing Pizzetti with employment and opportunities for operatic and incidental compositions. From 1902 to 1904,

[11] Ibid., 255.

[12] John C. G. Waterhouse. *Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973): the Life, Times and Music of a Wayward Genius*. (Australia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999) 41-2.

[13] Ildebrando Pizzetti. "Come si Entra nei nostri Istituti Musicali e come vi si Rimane e come se ne Esce" and "Gli Esami di Composizione ned nostri Istituti Musical," *La Voce*, 1909, quoted in *Musicisti Contemporanei*, (Milan 1914), reprinted in Waterhouse, *Emergence of Italian Music*, 24.

[14] Ibid.

the Teatro Regio di Parma appointed him assistant conductor, and shortly thereafter in 1905, he developed a fruitful friendship with the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), who had gained a reputation for his sensual and evocative poetry. Their friendship is evidenced by D'Annunzio's nickname for him, "Ildebrando da Parma," which Pizzetti used as a pseudonym on several of his early published works. In one such work, he wrote the incidental music for D'Annunzio's *La nave* (1905), in which Pizzetti employed the church modes, included significant sections of choral music, and rejected contemporary Italian trends of continuous rather than sectional composition. Similarly, his first opera, *Fedra* (1909-12), prominently features an unaccompanied prelude to the last act ("Trenodia per Ippolito morto"), and it reveals the sectional music influence of Florentine monody and Monteverdi's recitatives. Pizzetti's later theatrical works often reserved a large and dramatic role for the chorus.

Pizzetti composed choral works throughout his life, and in spite of the fact that he was not prolific in the genre, they encompass a wide variety of texts. The *Ave Maria*, *Tenebrae factae sunt*, and *Tantum ergo* for three-part male chorus and organ date from his time as a pupil at the Parma Conservatory, and they are among his earliest published works, composed when Pizzetti was only thirteen. His early secular works include two *Canzoni corali* (1913), "Canto d'amore" for male chorus (1914) and "Lamento" for tenor solo and chorus (1920); Pizzetti drew their texts from Greek mythology and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Similarly, his two late collections, three *Composizioni corali* (1942-3) and two *Composizioni corali* (1961), draw upon diverse literary sources. The three works in the first *Composizioni corali* collection either allude to or explicitly contain a sacred element: the text of "Cade la sera" is from D'Annunzio's *Laudi Book III: Alcione*, which peacefully refers to St. Francis of Assisi; "Ululate" is a Latin setting of passages from the book of Isaiah; and "Recordare Domine" is a setting of verses from the book of Lamentations. Pizzetti wrote the latter collection—his last—when he was seventy-seven years old, and it contains two pastoral poems of Greco-Roman mythology by Sappho: "Il giardino di Afrodite (The garden of Venus) and "Piena sorgeva la luna" (The full moon was rising).

Pizzetti's mature compositional period also includes his three cantatas for chorus and orchestra: the secular wedding cantata, *Epithalamium* (1939), inspired by Catullus's *Carmina*;[15] the cantata for male chorus, *Vanitas vanitatum* (1959), a setting of the Ecclesiastes "Vanity of vanities;" and the cantata for women's chorus, *Filae Jerusalem adjoro vos* (1966), drawn from the Song of Songs. Though Pizzetti's choral works utilize a variety of unique texts, Pizzetti's most well-known works are his settings of traditional sacred texts: *Messa di Requiem* and *De profundis* for seven voices (1937), the latter of which is a setting of Psalm 130 that features neo-Renaissance techniques similar to *Messa di Requiem*.

Messa di Requiem: Compositional Context

Pizzetti composed *Messa di Requiem* during a period of professional and personal transition. The period of its composition, from November 1, 1922 to January 2, 1923, coincided with the end of Pizzetti's sixteen-year tenure as

[15] Gatti, 74.

teacher and seven-year tenure as director at the Istituto Musicale in Florence. He assumed his new position as director of the conservatory in Milan shortly before completing the work.[16] This transitional period was also marked by the loss of Pizzetti's beloved first wife, Maria Stradivari, who died unexpectedly in 1920. He would not meet his second wife, Irene Campigli, until 1924, and thus the composition of *Messa di Requiem* occurred during a solitary interlude.[17]

A commission from the Accademia Filarmonica in honor of the deceased King Umberto provided Pizzetti with the necessary impetus to compose *Messa di Requiem*. At the time, Pizzetti had personal doubts about setting that particular text, as he reflected in 1949:

> I do not know if, without a commission, I would ever have composed a *Messa di Requiem*. At the time of writing it, I was in such an emotional state that I became overwhelmed by the tremendous immensity of the text. Time and time again I asked myself why I had returned to set religious texts to choral music. Was it because of a desire to believe in something extra-terrestrial beyond my comprehension? Or was it because of my need for the hope of peace? I do not know. Perhaps I composed the *Messa* out of the despair caused by my uncertainties, or my seeking comfort from a feeling of resignation through the means of choral expression. Was that feeling of resignation, though, provoked by my inability to comprehend the meaning of our present existence or the mystery of the afterlife?[18]

Messa di Requiem premiered in Rome at the Pantheon on March 14, 1924, before a private audience that included Italy's King Victor Emmanuel III and his court. Conductor Alessandro Bustini led the premiere. The performance commemorated the anniversary of King Umberto I's birth, which occurred on March 14, 1844.[19] Umberto "the Good" served as the King of Italy from 1878 until his murder by an anarchist in 1900, at which time his body was entombed in the Pantheon; this burial location made the temple a natural choice for the commemorative performance. After the Italian premiere, the first public concert took place in Carnegie Hall on March 25, 1924, performed by Schola Cantorum under the direction of Kurt Schindler. Ricordi published *Messa di requiem per sole voci* in 1923, and though it includes a keyboard reduction, the score remains true to its title, "for voices alone," by noting that the keyboard is only to be used as a *guida*.

Conservatism and Historicism

Pizzetti's setting of the Requiem Mass reflects his conservative beliefs about composition, counterpoint, and harmony, incorporating a number of neo-Renaissance and neo-Medieval techniques that align it with the musical principles outlined in Pope Pius X's *Tra le sollecitudini*. First, Pizzetti chose to compose seven standard texts––contained in five movements––proper to the Requiem Mass:

[16] Gatti, 13. While Pizzetti's responsibilities at the conservatory did not necessarily involve sacred music, it was never far away: one of Pizzetti's residences was just behind the church of the Madonna della Tosse on Via Pancani.

[17] Franco Sciannameo. "In Black and White: Pizzetti, Mussolini and "Scipio Africanus." *The Musical Times* 145 (Summer, 2004): 30-31.

[18] Bruno Pizzetti, ed. *Ildebrando Pizzetti: Cronologia e Bibliografia* (Parma: La Pilotta, 1980) 204, translated in Sciannameo, 30.

[19] Olin Downes, "Pizzetti's New Requiem Mass to Be Produced by the Schola," *New York Times*, March 16, 1924.

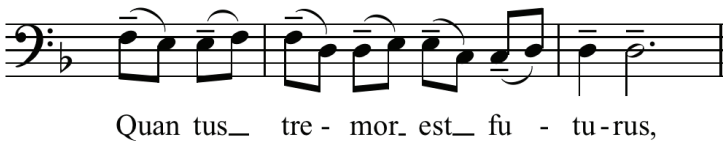
Table 1: Requiem texts set by Pizzetti

Messa di Requiem	**Omitted Texts**
Requiem (Introit and Kyrie)	Gradual (Requiem aeternam) Tract (Absolve, Domine)
Dies irae (Sequence)	Offertory (Domine Jesu Christe)
Sanctus and Benedictus Angus Dei	Communion (Lux aeterna)
Responsory (Libera me)	Antiphon (In paradisum)

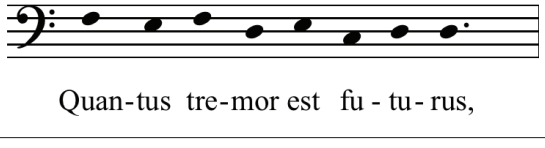
Pizzetti links the Introit and Kyrie texts in a single movement, but he preserves their division with a silent, metered separation between the texts, unlike the Sanctus and Benedictus, which are joined without any sectional break. The manner in which texts appear reflects conservative principles in that instances of text repetition are minimal and limited to point-of-imitation sections. Furthermore, Pizzetti preserves the text order with few exceptions. Specifically, the Libera me movement contains the only modifications of order, and they serve a structural purpose: first, the repetition of the opening "Libera me" text (rehearsal D) accompanies the reprise of the movement's opening musical material; second, the repetition of "Dum veneris" and its corresponding motive (rehearsal 72) demarcates the close of each formal section.

The uses of chant quotation, chant-like melodies and textures, and modes emulate Medieval and Renaissance models. The Dies irae features the plainchant sequence melody, and Pizzetti begins with exact quotations in octaves in the alto and bass voices, using the same pitches and corresponding rhythms as those that appear in the *Liber usualis*. Syllables that receive one neume are set as quarter notes in Pizzetti's setting; those that receive two neumes are set as eighth notes (e.g. "solvet saeclum"); and those that receive three neumes are set as triplets. Dotted neumes receive durations of at least three beats. Shortly after the literal quotation of the chant motives, Pizzetti sets the chant melody more freely at "Quantus tremor" by adding anticipations, which depict "trembling" (Example 1).

Example 1a: *Messa di Requiem* Dies irae, 1 m. after rehearsal 12, bass voice

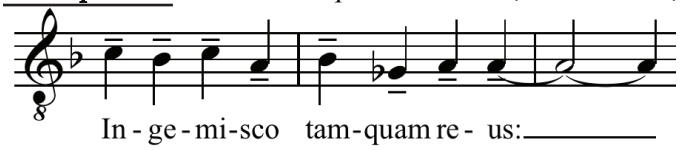


Example 1b: Dies irae, traditional plainchant from *Liber usualis*

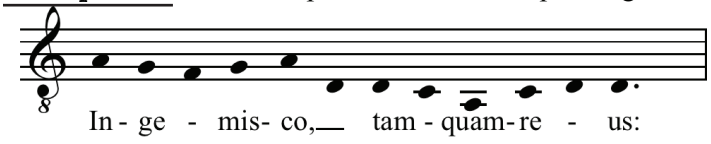


Although the eight Dies irae chant motives are used repeatedly, they do not always correspond with the appropriate text as it appears in the *Liber usualis*. Rather, Pizzetti uses the head motives "Dies irae," "Tuba mirum," and "Liber scriptus" as recognizable motives to organize and highlight the structure of the 57-line text (Example 2).

Example 2a: *Messa di Requiem* Dies irae, rehearsal 32, tenor voice

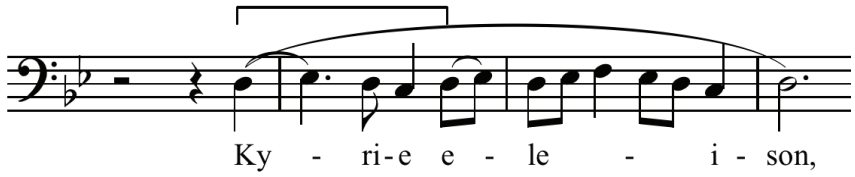


Example 2b: Dies irae, plainchant of corresponding text

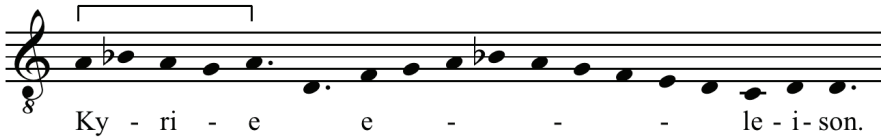


Although exact chant quotation occurs only in the Dies irae movement, a second similar example occurs at the imitative Kyrie (rehearsal E), which matches the first five pitches of Kyrie XI from *Missa Orbis factor* (Example 3). This similarity is likely the coincidental result of Pizzetti's composing in the style of plainchant rather than the result of a direct borrowing. In other instances of chant quotation, such as in the Dies irae, he uses the *Liber usualis* pitches without transposition and includes entire phrases of chant. In addition, his intentional quotations are proper to the liturgical celebration (the Mass of the Dead). Conversely, *Missa Orbis factor* is a general setting to be used on Sundays in Ordinary Time; it shares no affiliation with the Requiem Mass.

Example 3a: *Messa di Requiem* Introit, rehearsal E, bass voice

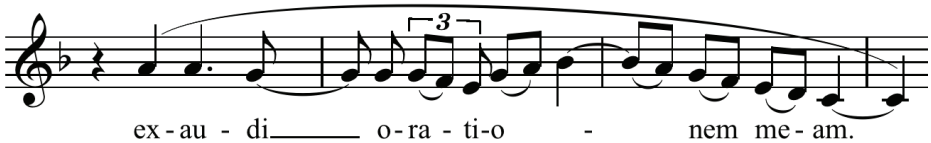


Example 3b: Kyrie XI "Orbis factor" *(Liber usualis* p. 46)



Several other melodies in *Messa di Requiem* emulate the melodic contour and texture of chant. In the opening "Requiem aeternam," the second basses sing the first five words of the Introit in unaccompanied unison, and the rising and falling melodic contour uses mostly stepwise motion, with occasional leaps not exceeding the interval of a perfect fifth (Example 5a, below). The combination of texture and contour make this newly composed melody reminiscent of the natural arsis and thesis of neumatic chant melodies. In the same movement, a similar instance occurs in the chant-like alto melody at "exaudi orationem meam" (hear my prayer), which features sustained chordal accompaniment and then unaccompanied texture as well as stepwise, rising and falling melodic contour (Example 4). Examples of chant-like melodies abound throughout *Messa di Requiem*, and Pizzetti uses them not only for their sacred connotations but also for dramatic expression, as explored below.

Example 4: *Messa di Requiem* Introit, rehearsal 4, alto voice



Pizzetti also uses the church modes to evoke Medieval and Renaissance qualities. In the "Kyrie" section of the Introit, the point-of-imitation motive highlights the modal change from D minor ("Requiem aeternam") to D phrygian due to its hovering between the first and lowered-second scale degrees. The Dies irae maintains the dorian mode of the chant at the "Tuba mirum" motive, while the imitative "Quid sum miser" (rehearsal C) highlights the phrygian mode in a manner similar to the "Kyrie." In the Libera me the bass voice repetitively alternates between D and Eb at "Tremens factus" (eleven times at rehearsal A), once again emphasizing the phrygian mode.

In addition to the church modes, vertical sonorities used in *Messa di Requiem* often reflect an archaic vocabulary of consonance and dissonance. Archaic sonorities at cadences articulate structures within movements and also

make overall structural connections between movements. The concluding sonority at cadences is often a unison or perfect fifth, omitting the third altogether. In particular, the cadences at the ends of sections within movements often use this unqualified sonority, such as in the *Dies irae*, in which sections end in unison at three points: rehearsal C, one measure before rehearsal I, and in the third measure of rehearsal 38. Notably, the final cadence of the Libera me—and thus of the entire *Messa di Requiem*—resolves from a perfect fifth on A to a perfect fifth on D. In addition to its cadential function, the perfect fifth is used as an ominous drone accompaniment. For example, in the first movement, the first and second basses sing a phrygian-decorated perfect fifth drone at "Christe" below the tenor melody. Later, the Libera me begins with chanting the text on the same perfect fifth drone. Additional similar examples abound in which ancient modes and consonances evoke music of the past and are also exploited for their expressive possibilities.

The ubiquitous compositional techniques of canon, imitation, and chant paraphrase in *Messa di Requiem* emulate the prominent characteristics of Renaissance polyphony. Pizzetti uses canon regularly and with great variety: it may be embedded in two voices within a dense texture; it may be real or tonal; it may occur simultaneously between two pairs of voices; it usually appears at the unison (with or without octave displacement) but also may occur at the third or fifth; and it appears at a variety of time intervals. Table 2 details the variety and extent to which canon is employed, and it demonstrates that canon and canonic techniques generate musical material throughout *Messa di Requiem*.

Table 2: Use of canon techniques in *Messa di Requiem*

Movement	Location, Leader/Follower	Canon Technique
Requiem	reh A: soprano/tenor	8ve, exact canon at 2 beats
	reh B: tenor/alto	tonal, 3rd, soprano parallel with follower voice
	reh B: bass II / bass I	real, P5; canon texture accumulates
Dies irae	reh D: TII/SII, TI/SI	double canon at 8ve
	reh E: bass II / tenor II	canonic at unison, 6 beats separation
	reh G: TII/SII, TI/SI	double canon at 8ve
	reh L: pervasive	accumulation of canonic motive
	reh M: pervasive	rhythmic canon at unison and fifth
Sanctus	mm. 1–10: choir I/choir II	four-part canon at 1 m., unison
	reh A: choir I pervasive	canonic at 1 m., unison
	reh C: SII/TII (choir III)	canon at 2 beats (3/4 meter,) unison
	reh 58: SI/TI (choir III)	canon at 2 beats (3/4 meter,) unison
	reh 59: SII/TI/BI (choir II)	3-part canon at 2 beats
Angus Dei	mm. 1–6: S/A	tonal, P5; free ends to accommodate cadence
	reh A and B: S/B, S/T	tonal; P5; free ends to accommodate cadence
Libera me	reh C: S/T	unison, tenor follows but enters before soprano

Pizzetti also uses imitation in a prevalent manner. Imitative sections often begin canonically, such as the Kyrie (rehearsal E), where the points-of-imitation pervade all voices. Like Renaissance polyphony, new point-of-imitation motives coincide with new phrases of text, and all voice parts function equally in these sections. That is, the bass voice does not function as a harmonic foundation but as an equal, participating member of the imitation. In addition, Pizzetti uses imitation to provide textural contrast with surrounding sections that are homophonic or less dense, such as "Quid sum miser" in Dies irae (rehearsal C). Lastly, Pizzetti provides rhythmic contrast by using syncopated point-of-imitation entrances, as at "Recordare" in the same movement (rehearsal E).

Dramatic Expression

Pizzetti's youthful predilection for theatrical works manifests itself in dramatic elements found in *Messa di Requiem* in four major ways: 1) vivid expression markings that function as both technical musical and extramusical instructions, 2) the employment of a wide palette of dynamics, 3) the manner in which Pizzetti illuminates impressions of the text, and 4) how he paces structural tension and release.

First, the plethora of expression markings provides an abundance of musical instructions; nearly every phrase includes nuances of dynamics, articulations, or tempos. However, they also prescribe characteristics and attitudes for the performers' musical execution. For example, the imitative Kyrie section includes the indication *monotono*, suggesting an unchanging or expressionless quality in contrast with the previous section, which designated the alto voice *molto espressivo*. By using *monotono*, the limitation of nuance also indicates a removed, shielded, or objective posture towards the imitation. In the Dies irae, the chant melody requires a "dark" color or "gloomy" sentiment because of the *cupo* marking, and the first imitative section ("Quid sum miser," rehearsal C) is marked *dolente*, or "painful." Therefore, rather than simply marking *espressivo*, Pizzetti often stipulates an emotion that the performers should assume or convey. Next, the Sanctus is marked *chiaro e spazioso*, or "clear and spacious," but certainly this does not refer to the dense, 12-part texture. Rather, *chiaro* may describe the quality of singing and spazioso may indicate the impression of a vast expanse that results when the three choirs combine (mm. 1-8): each choir establishes this spaciousness by highlighting its distinct register via delayed entrances. The following movement, Agnus Dei, represents a reprieve from the intensity of the Dies irae and ecstasy of the Sanctus with the instruction *Calmo e dolce*. In the Libera me, Pizzetti writes *Con fervore profondo* (with profound fervor) in the place of a tempo marking; *calmo dolce* returns at the text "Requiem aeternam." In summary, throughout *Messa di Requiem*, Pizzetti's expression markings provide attitudinal characteristics in addition to technical instructions.

Second, Pizzetti uses a large palette of dynamics, but he reserves the extreme ends of the dynamic spectrum for a limited number of sections in order to impart particular emphasis. Two principles govern the overall dynamic scheme: gradual dynamic changes and the pervasion of soft dynamics. The rare exceptions to these two dominating traits lend special stress to those sections. For example, Pizzetti exploits the dramatic possibilities of the Dies irae text by juxtaposing *forte* statements of "Rex tremendae" and "Juste judex" with subdued

dynamics in the preceding section. Further, the only two appearances of *fortissimo* occur at the "Hosanna" exclamations in the Sanctus, the first of which uses the expansive voicing of over three octaves to designate it as the climax of the *Messa di Requiem* (rehearsal B). After this first "Hosanna," the music begins its gradual descent, for even the second "Hosanna" (rehearsal E) features narrower spacing—two octaves plus a major sixth—and it progresses toward resolution via its cadential-six-four harmonic function.

The muted dynamics and reduced texture of the Agnus Dei greatly contrast the *fortissimo*, eight-voice-texture conclusion of the Sanctus. The soft dynamics of the Agnus Dei, ranging from *piano* to *pianissimo*, are only surpassed by the *pianississimo* return of the "Libera me" text in the final movement. In the Agnus Dei, Pizzetti further subdues the dynamics in three ways: by designating that only half the choir sing (*soltanto una metá del coro*), by composing for the sparsest texture found in *Messa di Requiem* (four voices), and by using only one pair of unaccompanied, canonic voices at the beginning (soprano and alto). After the dramatic Dies irae and ecstatic Sanctus, the dynamic and textural reductions in the Agnus Dei produce a sublime moment of release at the salient text "Dona eis requiem."

Third, Pizzetti illuminates the Requiem text with general impressions rather than specific word painting. The manner in which the Dies irae chant combines with a newly composed motive exemplifies this unspecific approach. Regarding the liturgical chants of the Roman Catholic Church, Pizzetti asserted:

> [They] are probably as old as the simple poetry of the first believers. It is common knowledge that Christian liturgy was, from its beginning, a symbolic performance of Golgotha's drama or of some other event of Christ's life, or a simple narrative play based on some memorable story of the Holy Scriptures.[20]

Pizzetti intimates a brooding character of the *Dies irae* chant by pairing it with a sinuous, chromatic motive sung to the exclamation, "Oh!" This repeated exclamation marks Pizzetti's sole addition to the Requiem text—not in accordance with principles in *Tra le sollecitudini*. When this motive combines with the *Dies irae* chant, the tritone (D–G#) sounds repeatedly, and Pizzetti continues to feature the tritone without resolution throughout the movement. The tritone sounds particularly prominent at the ends of sections in this movement, and it contrasts its unsettled sonority with the resolution found in the ensuing sections (e.g. preceding "Lacrimosa" at rehearsal M and preceding "Pie Jesu" at rehearsal N).

Additional examples of textual impressions occur at points where Pizzetti juxtaposes lowered and raised modal scale degrees. In the first movement, the opening "Requiem" chant-like melody sounds clearly in D minor, but at the text "Et lux perpetua" B-flat and F-natural are raised to B-natural and F-sharp, resulting in a harmonic progression that shimmers with a transformative "light" (D minor: v to D major: IV at rehearsal A and I at rehearsal B). The Dies irae features a similar transformation at "Pie Jesu," where the B-flat to B-natural alteration marks the shift from dissonance to *dolce* consonance in D major.

Fourth, in the Sanctus, accumulative textures lead to the two "Hosanna" exclamations, but they also give a magnifying impression of a heaven

[20] Pizzetti, *Music and Drama*, 420.

and earth that are "full of thy great glory." In both instances, Pizzetti sensitively paces the music's tension and release: the first accumulative crescendo ("Pleni sunt caeli") lasts 12 measures and is accomplished by adding one voice to the texture in each of the first eight measures; the second accumulation ("Hosanna," rehearsal D) surpasses the first's tension by delaying the release and extending the crescendo's length to 20 measures.

Reprise, Return, and Relief: Satisfying the Performer and Audience

In addition to the notable historicism and dramatic expression, *Messa di Requiem* features formal structures and a variety of textures that create a satisfying performing and listening experience. With regard to formal design, Pizzetti uses arch forms to provide structural pillars of return at both macro- and micro-levels. In the first movement, both the written-in silence between the "Requiem" and "Kyrie" texts and the double arch structure imply its conception as two separate movements with reprises in each:

Table 3: Double-arch structure of *Messa di Requiem* Introit

Requiem				**Kyrie**			
A	a	"Requiem"	Dm	C	e	"Kyrie	D phrygian
	b	"Et lux"	G–D				
B	c	"Te decet"	Dm–A	D	f+g	"Christie"	to Dm
	d	"Exaudi"	D: V (transition)				
A'	a'	"Requiem"	Dm	C'	e	"Kyrie"	D phrygian
	b	"Et lux"	G–D				

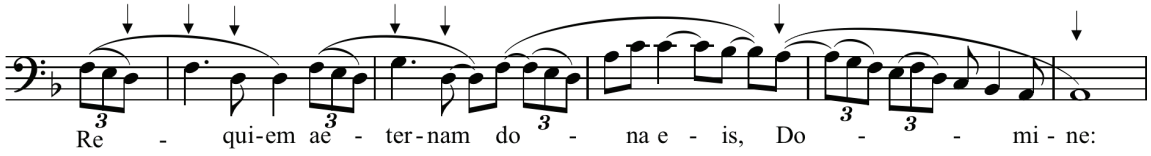
The Dies irae displays a complex arch construction at two levels: the movement's overall structure features ABA form, and mirror construction is also contained within the second and third sections:

Table 4: Overall and subdivided arch construction of Dies irae

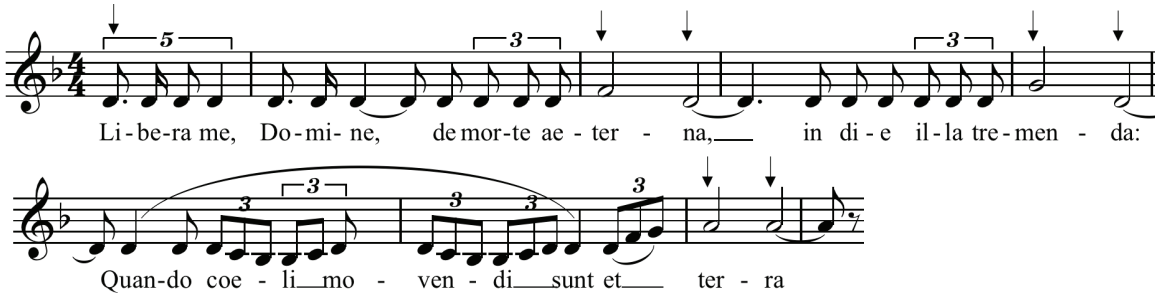
A	a "Dies"	
	b "Tuba"	
	c "Liber"	
B		d "Quid sum miser"
		e "Rex tremedae"
		f "Recordare"
		g "Quaerens me"
		e' "Juste judex"
		d' "Ingemisco"
A'	a "Qui Mariam"	
	b' "Inter oves"	
	a' "Oro supplex"	
	a" "Lacrimosa"	
Close "Pie Jesu"		

In addition to its unifying function within movements, the use of returning material also plays a structural role in the overall design of *Messa di Requiem*. The last movement, though not exact, reprises material from the first movement: the alto voice in Libera me echoes the opening "Requiem" chant-like bass melody; the alto does so by outlining the skeleton of the bass chant with less ornamentation: the first bass phrase rises to F and returns to D, as the alto does; the second bass phrase rises to G and returns to D, as the alto again does; and the last bass phrase circles around A before descending an octave to A, which the alto inverts by rising to close on A (rehearsals 69 and A). Pizzetti embeds the simplified alto part within a five-part texture, resulting in a sense of return that remains subtle rather than overt (Example 5).

Example 5a: *Messa di Requiem* Introit, m. 1-5, bass voice



Example 5b: *Messa di Requiem* Libera me, rehearsals 68-69, alto voice



Within the limits of unaccompanied choir, Pizzetti creates contrast with a remarkable variety of textures that, even in their densest forms, have a translucent quality. The sparse, four-voice and half-choir texture of the Agnus Dei has already been discussed, and it contrasts the 12-voice Sanctus, which Pizzetti organizes into three choirs: SSAA, TTBB, and TTBB. Because each choir sings homophonically with rhythmically chiseled motives in the Sanctus, the texture is essentially reduced to three blocked parts. Polychoral textures also occur when Pizzetti divides the voices into treble and bass choirs, such as in the "Christe" section of the first movement, where the tenor doubles as a participant in each choir (SAT/TBarB). In the Dies irae, scored for SSAATTBB, the predominant texture of four voices essentially sounds as only two parts because of octave doubling. In the same movement, Pizzetti reserves a true, eight-part texture for the forte "Ante diem" and the concluding "Pie Jesu." In addition to texture reduction, brief homophonic sections highlight the text or formal divisions, such as at "Et lux perpetua" (Introit), "Salve me" (Dies irae), and "Benedictus." This homophony contrasts with sections of complex imitation (e.g. Kyrie).

A Canon of Neo-Renaissance Contemporaries

Within the span of only three years (1920-23), Ildebrando Pizzetti, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Frank Martin produced major neo-Renaissance works that share a significant number of characteristics, and it is further remarkable that the English, Swiss, and Italian composers did so with no apparent knowledge of each other's compositions. First, each Mass can function liturgically with regard to length (24-29 minutes) and forces required (unaccompanied chorus, though Vaughan Williams includes soloists). Second, each includes newly composed, chant-like melodies, which appear throughout the work and which are highlighted in the opening of the first movement in a single voice part. Third, each Mass features modal melodies, harmonies, and tonalities but also incorporates twentieth-century or Romantic harmonies. Furthermore, additional similarities include extensive use of imitation, ABA and cyclic formal structures, and Venetian polychoral and fauxbourdon-like textures (Table 5).

There does not appear to be a single event or influence that links these three neo-Rennaisance compositions. Personal significance likely served a role in each composition (Table 5), and each was composed within the nascent period of musical interest in neo-classicism (Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* premiered in May 1920) and in Renaissance polyphonic works. Perhaps the devastation of the Great War subtlely remained in each composer's memory, and these works then were swept up in a stark reality, in a tempered human or spiritual awareness, or in a search for a pre-World War I innocence. Such inquiry into possible historical and societal influences may yield relevant insights, but such conclusions remain speculative as they lie beyond the scope of this analysis.

Table 5 on next page.

Table 5: Similarities in neo-Renaissance compositions (1920–23)

Ralph Vaughan Williams ***Mass in G Minor***	**Frank Martin** ***Mass for Two Mixed Choirs***	**Ildebrando Pizzetti** ***Messa di Requiem***
1920–21 Liturgical scope: 24'	1922 (Angus Dei: 1926) 29'	1922–23 27'
Solosists, double choir	Double choir	Chor (various divisi)
Personal significance: written for his friend, Gustav Holst, and his chorus, the Whitsuntide Singers in Thaxted	Personal significance: Martin did not release his *Mass* until 1963 because he "considered [the mass to be] between God and myself. I felt then that an expression of religious feelings should remain secret."	Possible personal significance: composed two years after his first wife's unexpected death
Cyclic structure: opening imitative Kyrie returns at Agnus Dei "miserere" m. 14; also "Kyrie" head motive in alto solo mm. 65-7.	Loosely cyclic: texture of Agnus Dei recalls that of "Agnus Dei, Filius Patris" in the Gloria, m. 59: in both instances choir II sings an open perfect fifth drone while choir I sings a *dolce* melody in octaves.	Loosely cyclic: opening of Libera me alto line recalls the opening chant in first movement (Example 5)
Venetian polychoral techniques: Sanctus "Osanna" (2 choir), use of *Stimmtausch*	Venetian polychoral: Gloria "Propter magnum gloriam" starting m. 44	Venetian polychoral: Sanctus (3-choir)
Fauxbourdon: e.g. Gloria "Qui tollis" section (m. 53)	Fauxbourdon-like technique: e.g. Sanctus m. 4	Fauxbourdon-like technique: e.g. Libera me, reh. 72
20th century harmonies: chromatic submediants (e.g. Gloria: mm. 5-6)	20th century harmonies: cluster chords (e.g. Gloria opening)	Neo-Romantic harmonies

Pizzetti's *Messa di Requiem* is a compelling twentieth-century composition that synthesizes neo-Renaissance and neo-Medieval techniques with nineteenth-century harmonic language and formal structures. Its successful dramatic expression results from Pizzetti's fondness for theatrical works and also from his personal connection with the Requiem text following the death of his first wife. The beauty resulting from the combination of structural, dramatic, and historical features warrants a closer look at this remarkable work through study and performance, potentially enabling a comprehensive understanding of twentieth-century neo-Renaissance compositions.

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